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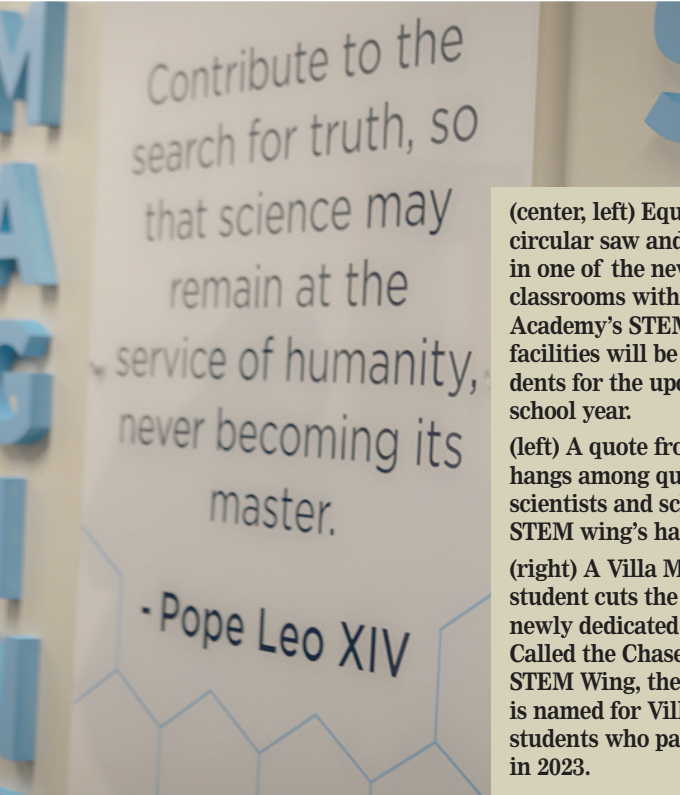
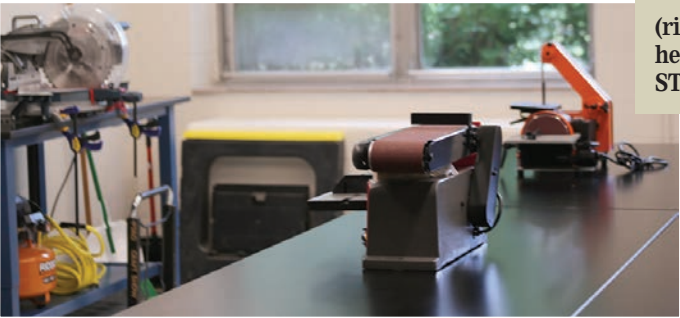
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(left) Pamela McQueen, president, Villa Madonna Academy, talks with a visitor prior to the blessing and dedication ceremony.



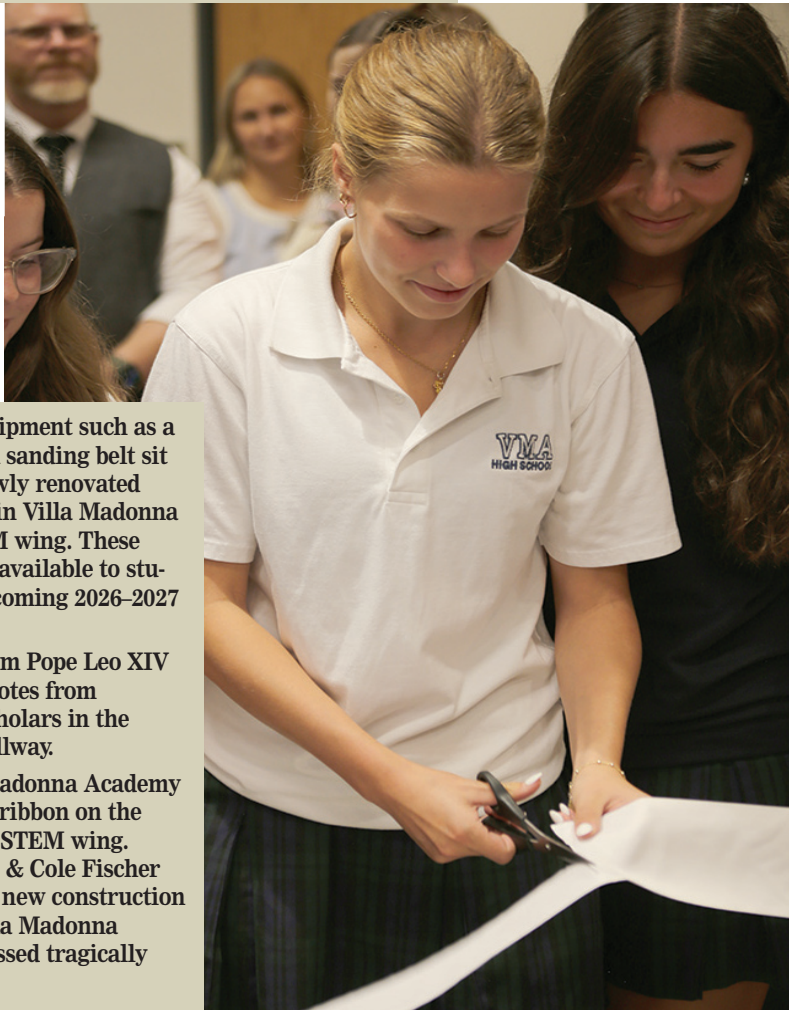
(right) Bishop John Iffert raises his hand as he blesses Villa Madonna Academy's new STEM wing, Aug. 14.



(center, left) Equipment such as a circular saw and sanding belt sit in one of the newly renovated classrooms within Villa Madonna Academy's STEM wing. These facilities will be available to students for the upcoming 2026–2027 school year.

(left) A quote from Pope Leo XIV hangs among quotes from scientists and scholars in the STEM wing's hallway.

(right) A Villa Madonna Academy student cuts the ribbon on the newly dedicated STEM wing. Called the Chase & Cole Fischer STEM Wing, the new construction is named for Villa Madonna students who passed tragically in 2023.



Villa Madonna Academy celebrates the dedication of new Chase & Cole Fischer STEM Wing

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

Faculty, staff and students gathered with members of the Villa Madonna Academy, Villa Hills, community to celebrate the blessing and dedication of the newly opened Chase & Cole Fischer STEM Wing. Named for brothers and Villa Madonna students Chase and Cole Fischer, who tragically died in 2023, the renovated classrooms and laboratories will be opening for students in the freshly begun 2026–2027 school year.

“So many in our Villa community have helped transform our campus, creating learning environments that reflect the excellence of a Villa education. We remain deeply grateful to all who help lay that foundation,” Pamela McQueen, president, Villa Madonna Academy, remarked during the wing’s dedication. “And now, the Chase and Cole Fischer STEM Wing represents the next step in that commitment — a place where curiosity is encouraged, creativity

flourishes and students are challenged to prepare for the opportunities of tomorrow.”

Made possible through the generosity of private family donors and St. Elizabeth Healthcare, the STEM wing, which includes equipment for engineering and dedicated laboratories for scientific disciplines such as biology, chemistry and physics, will allow for “students and teachers will design and prototype solutions, build and test engineering projects, explore robotics and automation, investigate scientific questions, create digital media, collaborate across disciplines and solve authentic, real-world problems,” said Mrs. McQueen. “And, as they do, they will discover that the greatest innovations are those guided by wisdom, compassion and a desire to bring love and light into the world.”

Scott Seifert, a mathematics and physics teacher at Villa Madonna Academy, remarked that he was “amazed” when the facul-

(Continued on page 21)

Father James Schaeper installed as pastor at St. Joseph Parish and St. Edward Mission

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

Bishop John Iffert officially installed Father James Schaeper pastor of St. Joseph Parish, Warsaw, and St. Edward Mission, Owenton, through the Rite of Installation of a Pastor, Aug. 16. Father Schaeper was gifted the keys to his parish, and vowed to fulfill his duties as pastor, making sacraments regularly available to his flock and sharing the word of God in accordance with the Church.

Father Schaeper's elevation to pastor comes after two years as Parochial Administrator to the parish and its mission. "What's the difference? What's the difference between a priest who is an administrator and a priest who is a pastor," asked Bishop Iffert to the congregation of St. Joseph Parish. Answering his own question he said, "To use biblical language, you might say it's the difference between a hired hand and a shepherd ... When a man becomes pastor, he becomes the shepherd of a local flock."

This role comes with increased duties and responsibilities, said Bishop Iffert, explaining that Father Schaeper now has "responsibilities toward you," he said to the congregation. "As pastor, he is in a sacred obligation to provide for you all of the instruments of sanctification that the Church extends. To assure that you have access to regular sacramental life, to the Eucharist, to the forgiveness of sins. He has a responsibility for the catechesis of every person in the parish," said Bishop Iffert.

To Father Schaeper, being a pastor means "leading others to Christ," he said. Through regular use of the sacraments of Communion and reconciliation. "With faith ... and with love and an open heart," he said. "We bring the sacraments, and being there for people in difficult times, but also in joyous times ... helping them to do God's will and to live out their vocation with faith and cooperating with God's will."

The Gospel story for the day of Father Schaeper's installation was the story of the Canaanite woman who was begging Christ for the healing of her daughter, who was wrought with evil spirits.

"Her only thought is the freedom of her child," said Bishop Iffert, "and she has come to believe that Jesus can free her child, and in freeing her child, free her." The woman pleaded with Jesus, calling out to him, "Lord, help me," said Bishop Iffert.

"Father Jim," said Bishop Iffert addressing Father

Schaeper, "everything you and I do in service to the people of God should begin with that prayer of faith. Everything we do must begin with trust in the Lord God, and with crying out to the Lord to help us in everything we do."

In begging for the healing of her child, the woman makes Jesus and his disciples "uncomfortable," said Bishop Iffert, for they believe there is no way they can help her. This uncomfortable tension exists in the world today, said Bishop Iffert, "Our life together as the family of God is not going to be perfect this side of Heaven."

From this Gospel reading, it is taught that amidst that tension "to persist in charity, to persist in love ... always in enduring love, always go on teaching, pleading administering mercy with a persistent need in Christ," he said.

"It's great instruction for us today, we celebrate



Bailey photos



(top, right) As part of the Rite of Installation of a Pastor, Bishop Iffert hands the keys of the parish to the new pastor, a symbolic transferring of ownership and responsibilities of the parish.

(above, left) During the rite, the pastor visits important sacramental and liturgical locations in the parish, incenses them and promises to fulfill his sacramental and catechetical responsibilities as pastor.

(above, right) Parishioners and the visiting Franciscan Daughters of Mary, applaud Father Schaeper as he accepts the keys of the parish.

During his remarks at the conclusion of Mass, Father Schaeper said, "we've done really great things here by cooperating with God's grace ... God bless you all and thank you."

FIRE Foundation of Northern Kentucky to host 'A Mass of Belonging' celebrating inclusion and community

Staff Report

The FIRE Foundation of Northern Kentucky invites families, educators, parish communities and supporters to join "A Mass of Belonging," a special Mass celebrating inclusion and creating a greater sense of belonging for individuals with learning differences and disabilities throughout the Diocese of Covington. This Mass will be the third annual Mass of its kind.

The Mass will be held Sept. 15, 6 p.m., at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington. Father Ryan Maher, the cathedral's rector, will be the celebrant.

The event is designed to celebrate the belief that there should be no separate Church for persons with disabilities, but "rather one flock that follows a single shepherd", according to the FIRE Foundation. The Mass will bring together members of the Diocese, families, Catholic schools, parishes, educators and advocates to celebrate the gifts and contributions of people of all abilities to the Catholic Church.

Representatives from the FIRE Foundation of Northern Kentucky will be in attendance. FIRE Foundation's mission is to champion the inclusion of students with disabilities in



Catholic schools by providing educational resources, fundraising and promoting a culture of belonging. This year, the FIRE Foundation was able to provide grant funding to six schools in the Diocese of Covington towards accessible education.

"A Mass of Belonging is an opportunity for our Catholic community to come together and celebrate that every person has a place at the table," said Missy Hail, president of the FIRE Foundation of Northern Kentucky. "We want families and individuals with disabilities to know that they are valued, welcomed, and an important part of our parishes, schools, and Diocese."

Following the Mass, attendees are invited to participate in a family ice cream social, providing an opportunity for fellowship and connection.

A mother and her daughter enjoy their time together at the 2025 Mass of Belonging, Sept. 9.



Transfiguration Mission church completes renovations one year after devastating flood

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

One year ago, in the early spring days of 2025, Transfiguration Mission church, Perry Park, situated near the Kentucky River, was rendered unusable after three feet of flood water destroyed all in its wake. The carpets, the pews and anything touching the floor had to be removed. After a painstaking year of renovations, the Church has opened its doors once more, inviting visitors and parishioners alike to come worship in a new space that inspires the “awesomeness” of the faith, said Father Thomas Picchioni, pastor.

To mark the occasion of the completion of the interior renovations, Bishop John Iffert traveled to the mission church, consecrated the altar, blessed the church and dedicated the new space, so that it might serve as a gateway to eternal life with Jesus for years to come.

The original Transfiguration Mission church was built in the seventies, and the interior reflected the design choices of the time, explained Father Picchioni. “It had a crucifix and everything, so you knew you were in a church, but that sense of awe seemed to be missing,” he said. When it came time to renovate the church post flood, Father Picchioni focused on deep liturgical themes and the want for a sacred space.

“I wanted people to feel a sense of peace just being here ... a piece of ‘I’m in a different world now,’” he said. “The intent of the whole redo was to get people to walk in here and just feel the awesomeness of what it means to be in a church.”

Because of the devastation caused by the flooding, the church was able to get an entirely new interior look. Originally, the tabernacle was off to the side, and the priest sat in the middle of the altar. Now, the tabernacle is situated on a new, wooden, high altar, adorned on the front with the carved image of the last supper. In addition, a new eternal flame was installed on the wall of the Church, replacing the one that was beside the tabernacle prior. The altar of sacrifice is also new, matching the gold detailing of the high altar; it depicts the sacrificial lamb with angels on either side. To match, the ambo is also a dark wood, with the imagery of the four evangelists.

The new sanctuary is larger than the old and

was designed by Father Picchioni with the space in mind. “I wanted the sanctuary to be as big as possible ... I designed it, gave it a unique look.” In addition, the crucifix that now hangs above the tabernacle, with a base of wood and gold detailing to match, was also hand-made by Father Picchioni.

His vision for the new space came together, through determination and help of his parishioners, “I said, ‘I’m going to fight to put something together that is what I think is going to give glory to God,’” he said.

Parishioner Diane Webster said, “people were very impressed walking in and seeing all the new fixtures and just how refreshing and ... it became more of a sacred space.”

“Seeing the time, effort, and money that got put into restoring it has definitely been very positive in our neighborhood, in our community, and it has definitely uplifted spirits ... In some ways, it’s helped restore faith in some of our neighbors,” she said. “I think it makes them feel like their faith life is valued.”

(right) The Sanctuary of the new interior features both a high and low altar, both with dark wood and gold detailing that marks the interior’s return to a “traditional” look, said Father Picchioni.

(below, left and right) The high altar features a carving of the last supper, while the low altar dons imagery of the sacrificial lamb and angels. The ambo features the four evangelists of the church, Sts. Mathew, Mark, Luke and John.



Catholic Family Night game day ball to be delivered by Catholic Charities neighbor who ‘exudes joy’



Savana Baumgartner holds a picture of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Ms. Baumgartner, who professes a devotion to the Blessed Virgin, was gifted the image by a friend for her birthday.

support of her previous counselors Paula Weber and David Durr; as well as current counselor Autumn Ruehl. As a Catholic, Ms. Baumgartner professes a special devotion to the Blessed Virgin and to the rosary. “I pray the rosary almost every day,” she says, saying that the devotion to Mary has “helped her a lot,” especially being wheelchair bound from a car accident in her youth.

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

When the Cincinnati Reds take on the Milwaukee Brewers on Catholic Family Night, Sept. 5, the game ball will be delivered by Savana Baumgartner — a friend and neighbor of Catholic Charities of Northern Kentucky.

Ms. Baumgartner and her family are 27-yearlong parishioners of All Saints Parish, Walton. Having attended Catholic Charities’ counseling services, Ms. Baumgartner regards it as a “good” experience. “They’ve been very good to me down there,” she said, speaking positively of the

Jill Walch, volunteer coordinator for Catholic Charities, said that Ms. Baumgartner is “a young woman whose smile speaks volumes.”

“She has a way of lighting up a room, drawing people in with her warmth, authenticity, and spirit. Her presence alone brings joy to others. I often think that her ministry is one of joy,” said Ms. Walch. “She exudes it naturally and generously. She reminds us that God and the Holy Spirit work in countless ways through countless people. Some are called to speak, teach or lead. Others witness to God’s love through the gift of their presence, the kindness they share,

and the joy they bring to those around them. Savana does this effortlessly.”

Tying into the theme of this years’ Catholic Family Night, “Love in Action,” Ms. Walch said that Ms. Baumgartner “reflects God’s love in a way that is both simple and profound, and everyone who encounters her is better for it. For me, she is a beautiful example of Love in Action.”



Bishop’s Schedule

Aug. 23
Catholic Charities CassBa Event, Drees Pavilion, Covington, 1 p.m.

Aug. 26
St. Joseph Academy 50th anniversary all-school Mass, All Saints Church, Walton, 6 p.m.

Aug. 27
Mass, Knights of the Holy Sepulcher, Mary, Seat of Wisdom Chapel, Crestview Hills, 6 p.m.

Correction

In the August 14 edition of the *Messenger*, Deacon Timothy Britt’s column “To have and to hold” omitted two words from the final paragraph, “without Jesus.” The sentence should read “What we can’t do **without Jesus** is take a spouse into our lives to have and to hold, until death do we part.” The *Messenger* apologizes for this error.





Calling all Reds fans — join Bishop John Iffert and Archbishop Robert Casey in cheering on the Cincinnati Reds at Catholic Family Night, Sept. 5. Grab your discounted tickets early to participate in the pre-game field parade. To buy tickets scan the QR code.

Couples invited to reignite the spark at Date with Father Nate

Laura Keener
Editor

Married and engaged couples are invited to reignite that spark, take a break from the ordinary and enjoy a night out with a spiritual twist at the second annual Date with Father Nate, Sept. 12, at St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring.

The evening, hosted by the Catholic Order of Foresters and Worldwide Marriage Encounter, is designed to help couples reconnect, laugh, pray and remember why they first fell in love. An optional vigil Mass begins at 5 p.m., with doors opening at 6:15 p.m. The event will include heavy hors d'oeuvres, drinks, fellowship, music and dancing.

Last year's Date with Father Nate drew more than 200 couples and, according to organizer Tom Kaelin, exceeded expectations. In an invitation email, Mr. Kaelin wrote that the feedback was "overwhelmingly positive," adding that one comment he heard often was, "We can't wait until next year; we're bringing our adult married children!"

For Dan Noe, a parishioner at St. Pius X Parish, Edgewood, and one of last year's sponsors, the event offered something many couples need but rarely seek out — a joyful, practical way to talk about marriage. He said Father Nathan Cromly was "really entertaining and engaging with the crowd," with a style that helped couples see marriage with fresh eyes.

"His approach to a topic around the sacrament of marriage and celebration with marriage really just helps people put it in perspective and help people reconnect," Mr. Noe said. He described Father Nate as "a blend of a comedian, faith background, and just his personality and his energy," adding that everyone seemed eager to hear what he would say next.

That mix of humor, faith and honesty is part of what makes the evening feel less like a lecture and more like a true date night. Couples are invited to dress up, share good food and conversation, and even get out on the dance floor. It is a chance to step away from chores, schedules and daily stress, and turn toward one another again.

Kathy Bessler, parishioner at Immaculate Heart of

Mary Parish, Burlington, who has been married to her husband for 37 years, said last year's event was "exactly what it sounded like — a date night," but with something deeper: "A date night with a spiritual twist," she said.

Mrs. Bessler said Father Nate offered simple, memorable ways for husbands and wives to strengthen both their

couples from across the diocese, creating community and encouragement beyond parish lines.

Mrs. Bessler agreed that younger couples should consider attending, too. While the evening celebrates romance and renewal, she said it also offers "time-tested wisdom and tips" that engaged and newly married couples would benefit from hearing.

In Catholic marriage, romance is not separate from faith. The spark between husband and wife is part of a holy calling: to love freely, faithfully and fruitfully. Date with Father Nate gives couples a joyful place to celebrate that calling, with laughter, prayer, conversation and a little music to remind them of



marriage and their faith. One challenge that stayed with her was his invitation for spouses to hold hands and pray the Our Father together each day.

"It was rejuvenating," Mrs. Bessler said. "It kind of made you fall in love again. Made you appreciate your spouse." She recalled moments when Father Nate asked couples to turn to each other and say words of love or gratitude. Those small moments, she said, helped "put a little spark back in it" and reminded couples not to take each other for granted.

Mr. Noe said the evening has something to offer couples at every stage. Whether newly married or married for decades, he said, couples can "renew their vision of the relationship and how it can be strengthened and meaningful." He also noted that the event brings together Catholic

Date With Fr. Nate A Celebration of Marriage

Sept. 12, 6–10 p.m.
St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring

Married and engaged couples are invited to enjoy laughter, practical wisdom, faith-filled encouragement and a renewed commitment to the vocation of marriage.

Register at <https://brushfire.com/eagleeyeministries/saint-john-leadership-network/631403>

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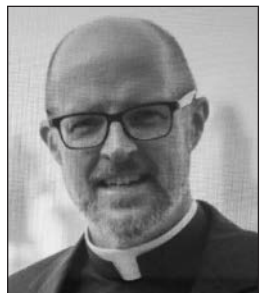
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The only question that matters

The readings for the Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time — Cycle A — are: Isaiah 22:19-23; Romans 11:33-36 and Matthew 16:13-20.

The intertwined questions of what is true, and how do I live in truth, are the two most important questions in life to answer, no matter how urgent other matters might appear. We are confronted in our proclamation of the holy Gospel

GO AND GLORIFY



Father Phillip DeVous

with both of those questions when Jesus asks the disciples, “but who do you say that I am?”

We are now immersed in a post-Christian moment in history. In this post-Christian moment, we are dealing with a culture-wide situation where knowledge of Jesus Christ is no longer “common knowledge,” much less a cultural norm. We are dealing with a situation where it is simply the case that many people no

longer have a personal faith in Jesus and no longer practice the faith. I think something fundamental has changed and we must reckon with it.

The late Pope Benedict XVI insightfully described this situation when he observed: “A particularly dangerous phenomenon for faith has arisen in our times: indeed, a form of atheism exists which we define, precisely, as ‘practical,’ in which the truths of faith or religious rites are not denied but are merely deemed irrelevant to daily life, detached from life, pointless. So it is that people often believe in God in a superficial manner, and live ‘as though God did not exist.’ In the end, however, this way of life proves even more destructive because it leads to indifference to faith and to the question of God.”

The situation of post-Christian man is that he cannot conceive that he is in anyway separated from God because the question and the reality of God have been nullified. That means voided or invalidated as legitimate questions for serious consideration. One might even say God has been liquified — everything is God, nothing is God or whatever.

This age of the nullification of God is a total paradigm shift in the consciousness and culture of the western world, leading to a profound reorientation of our souls. The consequence is that we now live within a formative cultural, educational, economic, personal, political and social situation that is fundamentally, not merely unbelieving, but anti-theistic in a radical way — right down to the very unconscious assumptions of every aspect of contemporary life and living.

Contemplating our situation, we see the Lord directs his gaze toward us, asking, “but who do you say that I am?” His disciples are meant to know the answer to the question. It is not a test. It is a call to profess our faith! After all, in our worship and prayer, we are the ones who swim up to the very heart of God and put our lips to his blood. We are meant to know. After all, the Word of God is made for our heart, and our heart is made for the Word of God.

In recognizing that we live within a situation where God’s existence is not so easily assumed and the presence of Jesus Christ not so readily recognized, we also consider the question, “Lord, where did you say you would be?”

Our Blessed Lord did not just leave us with mere memories of him that would degrade over time. He left us his Word and his presence in the Holy Sacraments and the Church. The Church and sacraments continue the work of Jesus’ incarnation, within us and among us. As St. Leo the Great has taught, “what was to be seen of our Redeemer has passed over in the Sacraments so that faith might be more perfect and more firm.”

In the Gospel passage we proclaim this Sunday, Peter’s answer is meant to be our own: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And in response to his answer, Jesus gives Peter the keys to the kingdom of heaven.

Those keys of the kingdom are the Holy Sacraments. If you want to access the kingdom of the divine life of God, the sacraments, most especially the Holy Eucharist, are the keys. The Holy Sacraments build up the Body of Christ, bringing the Holy Spirit’s power to us to transform us into living images of Jesus Christ. They are how Jesus Christ shares his holiness with us. They are the means by which the gaze of our whole existence is oriented to Jesus Christ above all things and in all things.

“But who do you say that I am?”

Blessings or luck

Blessings upon blessings is what I am experiencing. When mere coincidence or luck cannot explain such great fortune, I believe the Lord loves to bless us in his divine will. I also believe the saints delight interceding for us if we ask.

My patron, St. Therese of Lisieux at my parish in Southgate, has been special to me for the past 50 years and to whom I seek intercession. Asking for a safe and memorable journey with travels for my family and some friends for our first trip to Alaska this July was on my prayer list. How providential to learn that St. Therese is the patron Saint

of Alaska. Other friends shared their discovery of a National Shrine to St. Therese on their recent trip.

In Juneau, about a 50-minute Uber ride on Route 7 north from downtown is the shrine, and I felt compelled to visit. Afterall, our trip was marked by blessings of perfect weather, smooth sailing, easy transfers, timely encounters. I cannot begin to recount the “lucky” blessings in my life and on this trip specifically.

Not to mention the many blessings bestowed on DCCCH Center where I work. So many gifts and donations that have kept the Center operating. So many responses, just at the right time, for people to volunteer, mentor, become foster and adoptive parents for children traumatized by abuse and neglect. It is astonishing how God works and how very thankful I am. Although the need is ongoing, the Lord inspires and people answer.

I encourage your prayers and offers of thanksgiving with intercession from your favorite saint, and include St.

VIEWPOINT



Ronald M. Bertsch

A real American hero

Mary marked the one-year anniversary of the election of Cardinal Robert Prevost as Pope.

It has been exciting following our very own American-born Pope through his first year — although what has most

edified me is that Leo XIV has not allowed himself to be pigeonholed as an “American Pope.” He is a missionary who belongs first to the Lord and, for his sake, to the entire world.

This should not be surprising, since Leo’s personal background reflects no less than four ethnicities (French, Spanish, Italian and Louisiana Creole).

After ordination and study in Rome, he spent the first two decades of his priestly life as a missionary in Peru and then traveled

all over the world for 12 years as the prior general of the Augustinian Order.

As a young Little Sister of the Poor, I had the grace to live abroad. I spent only two years in France before obedience called me back to the United States but two years were long enough for me to realize that my homeland is not the only place on earth that has been gifted with cultural, historical and spiritual riches, as well as interesting, engaging, beautiful — and needy — people.

Although he spent much more time in Peru than I did in France, my years abroad coincided with our Holy Father’s early years in South America. Perhaps that is why I look up to him now with such admiration. Embracing other cultures as one’s own — with all the differences in language, customs, food and so many other details of everyday life — requires both humility and magnanimity, both open mindedness and determined self-sacrifice.

When I look at Pope Leo XIV, I often remember Mother Celine, our former superior general, who was American and the first non-French leader of our Congregation.

Mother Celine spent most of her long and active life in France — without ever mastering the accent — serving for many years as the mother of all the Little Sisters and elder-

John the Apostle, St. Joseph the foster father of Jesus, and Mary Mother of God, our patron saints for the DCCCH Center. Each new season brings more need, so please keep praying.

What started in 1937, just 12 years after St. Therese’s canonization, the shrine in Juneau was taking shape. The shrine did not disappoint in 2026. It now sits on 46 acres of land, and it took an Act of Congress for the land to be purchased. It provides breathtaking views of the Inside Passage of the Gulf of Alaska in the Gastineau Channel with mountains in the background.

The stone structure itself sits upon a little hill on a small island shrouded by pine trees. You walk across a stone reinforced causeway to reach the shrine. A large outdoor statue of St. Therese stands beside the church, and a large white cross sits higher on the hillside. More special was the path that wove around the trees of the shrine dotted with all the Stations of the Cross, including the fifteenth Resurrection Station. The stations, like the church, are also made of round, smooth stones gathered from the shoreline. It is a very peaceful and meditative environment.

St. Therese Parish, the Diocesan Shrine of the Little Flower in Campbell County, might not have the ocean and mountain views but it is celebrating the Centennial anniversary with fun and memorable events to mark this milestone.

Msgr. Borgias Lehr was the first pastor in 1927, with Father Michael Grady recently installed as our sixth pastor. Watch the news and updates if you are interested in the celebration. We have a unique devotion to St. Therese’s parents, Sts. Zelle and Louie Martin too. That second holy family, I believe, wants to help us — keep praying!

To learn more about foster care, adoption or mentoring at DCCCH Center, contact DCCCHcenter.org. An informational meeting is planned for Monday, Sept. 21, at 6:30 p.m. *Ronald M. Bertsch is director of Therapeutic Foster Care/Adoption for the DCCCH Center for Children and Families, Ft. Mitchell.*

GUEST



Sister Constance Veit, L.S.P.

ly around the world. She once told me that we must not leave our native country to serve in another because we do not love it, but precisely because we do and we want to offer this love as a sacrifice pleasing to God.

Perhaps this sacrificial love is what motivates Pope Leo. In any case, observing him during his first apostolic journeys it is obvious that he belongs to everyone and embraces everyone, desiring that through him they be touched by the universal love of God.

Pope Leo visited the Little Sisters of the Poor during each of his first two visits outside Italy.

In November 2025 — Thanksgiving day — he visited our home in Istanbul, Turkey; and on April 14 of this year, he visited our home in Annaba, Algeria.

Both of these houses are located in countries where Catholics represent very tiny minorities and in both locations the majority of Residents served by the Little Sisters are non-Christian. During both of these visits, the Pope emphasized how universal charity helps us to build peace.

In Annaba he said, “I think that the Lord, looking down from heaven upon a house like this, where people strive to live together in fraternity, would say, ‘There is hope!’ Yes, because God’s heart is torn apart by wars, violence, injustice and lies. But our Father’s heart is not with the wicked, the arrogant or the proud. God’s heart is with the little ones, with the humble, and with them he builds up his Kingdom of love and peace day by day, just as you are striving to do here in your daily service, in your friendship and life together.”

In Istanbul, the Holy Father acknowledged the patience and prayer required to unite people from diverse backgrounds under one roof.

And he told the Little Sisters, “The Lord has called you not only to assist or help the poor; but has also called you to be their “sisters!” You are to be like Jesus, whom the Father sent to us not only to help and serve us, but also to be our brother.”

I pray that God will permit Pope Leo XIV to serve for many years, for more than ever the world needs the messenger of peace he has become.

I also pray that the youth of our country will look to this Pope as a real American hero!

Sister Constance Veit is the communications director for the Little Sisters of the Poor in the United States and an occupational therapist.

Our answer to that question determines everything, not just for us, but the very life of the world.

Father Phillip W. DeVous is pastor of Sts. Peter & Paul Parish in California, Ky

Sisters of St. Joseph the Worker celebrate Sister Philomena Marie's first profession of vows

Bella Bailey

Multimedia Correspondent

Tucked away from the rest of the world, down a winding drive in Walton, Ky., occurred a moment of total abandonment to the Lord as Sister of St. Joseph the Worker Philomena Marie made her first profession of vows, Aug. 15. Inside the small convent chapel gathered Sister Philomena's mother, father and brother who traveled from Oklahoma, along with friends of the Sisters St. Joseph the Worker.

The profession of first vows is an important milestone in the life of any consecrated religious as it leads them deeper into life with their community and prepares them for their final vows, where they become fully consecrated to Christ. Sister Philomena professed these vows during Mass celebrated by Bishop John Iffert, concelebrated by Bishop Emeritus Roger Foys; Father Matt Cushing, chaplain for the Sisters of St. Joseph the Worker; Father Daniel Schomaker, pastor of Blessed Sacrament Parish, Ft. Mitchell; Father Kelly Edwards, a priest of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City and Sister Philomena Marie's former campus minister and spiritual director during her vocational discernment. Also in attendance were Deacons Hudson Henry, St. Joseph Parish, Crescent Springs, and Chuck Melville, St. Barbara Parish, Erlanger, as well diocesan seminarian, Will Fuller.

In preparation for her first vows, Sister Philomena participated in a silent retreat, where she spent six days reflecting on this next step in her discernment to consecrated life. When the day came to profess her first vows, Sister

Philomena said she felt only, "a profound sense of peace." Though nervous in the days leading up to the event, "when I walked into the chapel right before Mass, I just felt this space, like the peace that surpasses all understanding that the Lord gives and it's like, 'yes, I'm here. I'm ready, and here I am Lord. I come to do your will,'" she said.

During the profession of vows, Bishop Iffert blessed the crucifix and chain that each sister of the order wears, as an outward manifestation of their union to God, something that Sister Philomena likened to a wedding ring. She recalled a moment, the night before she was to profess her vows, "sister was setting up the chapel, and she had the crucifix on a little table, and that was the moment, like 'oh, this is for real.'"

Prior to the profession of vows, during his homily, Bishop Iffert said to Sister Philomena, "You are choosing today, with these vows, a life filled with blessing ... Those who are consecrated to the Lord Jesus Christ, who go all in on that single most central loving relationship of our lives, is all for gain. Even the hardships you encounter, even the difficulties that come with life, they are for something. They are for learning the language of sacrificial love."

Sister Philomena Marie will continue to renew these "temporary vows" once every year for at least three years before professing final vows, where she will be bound forever in consecration to Christ.

(top, left) Sister Philomena's brother prepares the kneeler which his sister will use to make her first profession of vows.

(top right) Sister Philomena kneels before Bishop Iffert as she makes a first profession of vows to God saying, "I

humbly beseech your infinite goodness, through the precious blood of Jesus Christ, to accept my consecration to you, and as you have enabled me to conceive the desire of it, so give me the grace faithfully to accomplish it."

(center) Following her profession, Sister Philomena smiles happily, while Sister of St. Joseph the Worker Mother Christina wipes away tears of joy.

(bottom) Sister Philomena and her parents share a quiet moment of comfort and joy. "I am so deeply honored that they are supportive in my decisions and my consecration," said Sister Philomena of her parents.



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PEOPLE AND EVENTS

The weekly TV Mass from the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption is broadcast locally on The CW, Sundays, 10 — 11 a.m. Viewers can tune-in on the following channels: antenna 12.2; Spectrum 117 or 25; Cincinnati Bell 17 or 517; and DirectTV 25.

Festivals, prayer services, etc. Parishes, schools and Catholic organizations of the Diocese of Covington can now have their event featured on the Diocesan online calendar. Submit your event at <https://covdio.org/calendar/>.

Extraordinary Ministers are needed, especially on Sundays, at St. Elizabeth hospital in Edgewood. If you are a Eucharistic minister, or are interested in becoming one, contact the Pastoral Care office or the Volunteer office at St. Elizabeth for more information, (859) 301-2000.

Notre Dame Urban Education Center, Covington, is seeking adult volunteers to tutor children in grades K-8 one day a week in the Homework Plus Program, Monday–Thursday, 3–5 p.m. The program runs Sept. 8, 2026–May 13, 2027. Volunteers must be Virtus trained and compliant. Contact Brandi at (859) 630-9475 or blenihan@nduec.org for information.

St. Vincent de Paul Northern Kentucky is in urgent need of Call Center volunteers to answer calls for assistance. On average, we receive over 1,700 calls each month. Shifts are available M-F, 10 a.m.–noon and noon–2 p.m. Training and initial shifts at our Erlanger location, with remote volunteering possible after. Must be 18+ years old. Background check (provided) required. Visit www.svdpnky.org/volunteer to register.

Volunteers needed at St. Vincent de Paul NKY’s Erlanger Food Pantry. Volunteers assist neighbors as they shop and keep the shelves stocked. More than 300 families are served each month. Shifts are: Tuesdays, 9 a.m.–noon and 4–6 p.m.; Wednesdays, 9–11 a.m. (stocking only); and Thursdays, 9 a.m.–noon. Visit www.svdpnky.org/volunteer to register.

Healing, prayer and adoration to conclude the Novena of Our Lady of Knock, Aug. 22, 7 p.m. at St. Patrick Parish and Shrine, Taylor Mill. The evening will include veneration of a relic of St. Faustina.

Catholic Charities of Northern Kentucky will be hosting a Mental Health First Aid certification class Aug. 25, 9 a.m.–3:30 p.m., diocesan Curia, Covington. No cost to attend. Upon successful completion, participants will receive a Mental Health First Aid certification. Register via <https://form.jotform.com/MHFACollaborative/catholic-charities-mhfa-8252026>.

Carmel Manor will be hosting their festival Aug. 29, 3–10 p.m. An unforgettable day of family fun, delicious food, live entertainment, raffles, Split the Pot, kids games and so much more — all while supporting the residents of Carmel Manor. Cash only event.

Newport Central Catholic annual Fine Arts Hall of



Teachers in training

Teachers at Holy Trinity School, Bellevue, Prince of Peace School, Covington and St. Patrick School, Taylor Mill, shared professional development training together in preparation for the upcoming school year. It was a very productive day and a wonderful opportunity for teachers in small schools to collaborate.

Fame, Aug. 29, 5:30 p.m. social; 7 p.m. dinner and ceremony. This year’s inductees are Tammy Vulhop Hubler ‘95, Michael Connor ‘68, Steve Schofield ‘94, Scott ‘82 and Jane Grosser, and Therese Muench Blank ‘77; Show of Distinction is the production of “Shrek.” Cost \$35, RSVP by Aug. 21, <http://ncchs.com/events>.

Join Bishop John Iffert, Sept. 5, for Catholic Family Night at Great American Ball Park as the Reds take on the Milwaukee Brewers. Enjoy discount tickets as the Cincinnati Reds take on the Milwaukee Brewers. Bring your family, friends, and fellow parishioners for a fun night of fellowship. Bobblehead featuring Elly De La Cruz to fans in attendance, while supplies last. Participate in the on-field parade at 5:30 p.m. and greet Bishop Iffert at home plate. The theme “Love In Action” features the ministries of Catholic Charities on both sides of the river. For tickets visit <https://www.gofevo.com/event/Archdiocesecovington2>.

Newport Central Catholic High School invites you to bring your family up on the school hill, Sept. 6, for the Labor Day fireworks at its 32nd Family Fireworks Fest. Food trucks, drinks and fun begin at 5:30 p.m. (no cans, bottles or coolers permitted). Admission \$5; tickets can be purchased at <https://gofan.co/app/school/KY6479?activity=Event%20School>. For information contact Tessy Krebs at (859) 292-0001 or tkrebs@ncchs.com.

“Date Night with Father Nathan Cromly – An Evening Celebrating the Sacrament of Marriage,” Sept. 12, St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring, optional vigil Mass, 5 p.m.; doors open at 6:15 p.m. With his signature blend of humor, honesty, and practical wisdom, Father Cromly speaks directly to the realities of marriage, offering couples a renewed vision for their relationship and simple, meaningful ways to strengthen it. <https://brushfire.com/eagleeyeministries/>

The FIRE Foundation of Northern Kentucky will be hosting a “FIRE in the Hole” golf outing, Sept. 12, at Devou Golf Course. Starting with registration at 8 a.m., the event will feature a 9 a.m. shotgun start and a 3–5 p.m. cocktail hour. Price is \$500 for a foursome (\$125 per golfer.) Includes breakfast, lunch, 2 drink tickets and hors d’oeuvres included. Win exciting prizes for longest drive, closest to the pin, live auction, raffles and split-the-pot. More information and registration online at <https://www.fire-foundationnky.org/golf>.

Bishop John Iffert will celebrate Vespers at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption in Covington to honor couples celebrating significant wedding anniversaries in 2026. Married couples celebrating their 1st, 25th, 50th, 60th, or 60+ wedding anniversary in 2026 are invited to a Vespers celebration on Sep. 13 at 2 p.m. Anniversary couples should RSVP by August 17, 2026, at covdio.org/wedding-vespers/. Phone registrations are available through Isaak Abraham Isaak at (859) 392-1529. Reservations are required only for anniversary couples; family members and guests are welcome to attend. Congratulatory certificates will be available upon request.

Father Ryan Maher will celebrate A Mass of Belonging, Sept 15, 6 p.m., Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington. Organized by the FIRE Foundation of Northern Kentucky, the Mass will bring together families, educators, parish communities, Catholic schools, and supporters to celebrate the belief that there is no separate Church for persons with disabilities — we are one flock. Following Mass, families and attendees are invited to an ice cream social.

Empowering God’s Children 5th annual facilitators’ training, Sept. 15, Curia, Covington. All facilitators, priests, principals, DREs and CREs are welcome to attend, as well as anyone interested in learning more about the program. Dinner and networking begin at 3 p.m.; training ends at 5:30 p.m. Registration requested at <https://forms.gle/LmtrSBxFjDmh64L1A>

“Understanding Marriage and Baptism in the OCIA Process,” presented by Dr. William Keimig. Sept.19, a

Parish festivals

Aug. 28–30 St. Augustine, Augusta Parish festival	Sept. 5–6 St. Anthony, Taylor Mill Festival Latino	Sept. 11–12 St. Barbara, Erlanger Rocktoberfest	Sept. 20 St. Matthew, Morning View 12–7 p.m. Parish festival
Aug. 28–29 Holy Cross District High School, Latonia School festival	Sept. 5–7 St. Cecilia, Independence Parish festival	Sept. 11–13 St. Patrick, Maysville Parish festival	Sept. 25–27 St. Agnes, Ft. Wright Oktoberfest
		Sept. 18–20 St. Timothy, Union Oktoberfest	

workshop exploring the pastoral and canonical issues related to the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults and Children (OCIA/OCIC). RSVP by Sept. 7, online https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfAK93XyEMkbAFuqO1JeJH_3qI6GfVQ9AmVagIQPA-4daV1Kg/view-form . Contact Isaak at iisaak@covdio.org or (859) 392-1529.

The Intercommunity of Women Religious Peace and Justice Committee and Mother of God Parish, Covington, will host a prayer service for the 112th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Sept. 27, 2 p.m. at Mother of God Church, Covington. All are welcome. Pope Leo XIV has chosen the theme, “Even Just One of These Children,” taken from Matthew’s Gospel “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.” (18:5) It focuses on the need for pastoral care for minors on the move.

All former St. Thomas School students who attended for at least one year between 1949 and 1976 are invited to a reunion Oct. 4, 3–7 p.m., in the St. Thomas School Cafeteria. Guests are welcome. Cost is \$50 per person; reservations deadline Sept. 15. For an RSVP form contact Tom Dierig at (859) 781-8743 or tomdierig@gmail.com.

“Vatican II Workshop: Proclaiming the Joy and Hope of Christ to the Modern World,” an engaging and informative workshop presented by Prof. Lucas Pollice, chief mission officer, Diocese of Colorado Springs, Nov. 14, 8:30 a.m.–4 p.m., Thomas More University’s Ziegler Auditorium. Register by Oct. 23 online registration form: Register Here. Again, everyone is welcome to attend. Contact Isaak at iisaak@covdio.org or (859) 392-1529.

TEC (Teens Encounter) Christ is coming to the Diocese of Covington. TEC is church movement that evangelizes and accompanies older teens and young adults within an intergenerational community. Participants are invited into this community through a 3-day retreat. If you have attended a TEC weekend in another diocese and would like to serve on a TEC team or support TEC, contact Angie Poat, apoat@covdio.org. High school juniors and seniors, and college students, are invited to attend TECov #1, Nov. 21–23, 2026 or TECov #2, March 6–8, 2027.

World Youth Day 2027, Seoul, South Korea, July 30 to August 10, 2027. The Diocese of Covington is coordinating a pilgrimage to World Youth Day 2027 for young adults ages 18 to 35. Experience the universality of the Catholic Church in the presence of our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, alongside millions of young adult Catholics from around the world. Bishop John Iffert hopes to join the pilgrims along with a few priests and deacons from the diocese. Estimated cost is \$5,500 per person and includes round-trip airfare, transportation, lodging, meals (from WYD) and tours. To reserve your spot, the initial payment of \$800 is now due. The full amount must be paid by Monday, March 15, 2027. For more information, go to covdio.org/register/

Millions of Monicas prayer group, St. Mary of the Assumption Church, Alexandria, the first Monday of each month, 6:30-7:30 p.m. Women are invited to gather for one hour of guided prayer for the intention that our children and youth will return to or remain active in the faith. For information call Carol, (859) 653-5638. Note: no gathering in September due to the Labor Day holiday.

Bishop Iffert and the priests of the Diocese of Covington will pray a Holy Hour for survivors of sexual violence and for the sanctification of priests, 3 p.m., every third Thursday monthly, at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington. All are welcome.

The Holy Face of Jesus devotion, every Tuesday 6 p.m., St. Cecilia Church, Independence, with Benediction 7 p.m., for reparation of sins against the first three commandments: denial of God, blasphemy and the profanation of Sundays and Holy Days; includes praying the Litany of the Holy Face of Jesus, the Holy Face Chaplet, prayers of petition and silent devotion, all during Exposition.

Sacred music must be ‘dignified,’ reflecting the mystery being celebrated, pope says

Carol Glatz

Catholic News Service

Singing and playing music during the liturgy is an integral and necessary part of the celebration, which means it is much more than something “decorative,” Pope Leo XIV said.

“In the liturgy, to sing and to play music means to pray, attuning one’s heart to that of our sisters and brothers and to God, through active participation in the mystery that is being celebrated,” he said during his general audience talk in St. Peter’s Basilica Aug. 19.

“Far from being merely decorative, therefore, sacred music is a treasure of profound value. It should always be dignified, draw inspiration from Sacred Scripture and reflect the grandeur of the mystery celebrated,” he added.

During the audience, the pope also invited all Catholics to continually cultivate “a genuine awareness of peace.”

“May you sincerely recognize that peace is a precious and great gift, and that it requires a strong and constant commitment to achieve it, by honestly and truthfully following the paths that build and sustain it in society,” he said in Italian.

In his main talk, Pope Leo continued his series of talks on the Second Vatican Council, focusing on the importance of sacred music as outlined in the council’s constitution on the sacred liturgy, “Sacrosanctum Concilium.”

“Indeed, singing and playing a musical instrument are acts of prayer,” he told English-speakers in his summary. “Music thus fosters our unity in praising God and opens our hearts to be fashioned by his grace.”

The council’s text “confirms and deepens the ministerial function of music in the liturgy, which had already been highlighted by St. Pius X” in 1903 with his document, “Tra Le Sollecitudini” (“Among the Concerns”), Pope Leo said in his main talk in Italian.

The Council Fathers recognized that “certain requirements” are, therefore, necessary, the first being that “it must respond at every level to what is most appropriate for the liturgical moment, beyond fashions or the particular sensitivities of composers,” he said.

“Its form, especially in its melodic aspect, must be at once noble and simple, of high musical quality and easily



CNS photo/Vatican Media

Thousands of people gather for Pope Leo XIV’s weekly general audience in St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican Aug. 19, 2026.

performable, particularly when it is intended to be sung by the whole assembly,” he added, referring to the teachings in the conciliar document.

The council recommended that “the texts too should be suitable, profound and at the same time readily understandable, inspired mainly by Sacred Scripture, the liturgical books and the spiritual tradition of the Church,” so that “the law of prayer,” which is also “the law of faith, may remain alive and continue to grow,” the pope said.

“‘Sacrosanctum Concilium’ devotes considerable attention to the theme of the active participation of the faithful,” because the emphasis is on fostering a “greater awareness of the mystery being celebrated and its relationship to daily life” in a “spirit of constant conversion,” he said,

quoting Pope Benedict XVI.

Each minister and member of the faithful is called to perform those parts which pertain to their office in a “harmonious balance between the different ministries” and with appropriate moments of “reverent silence,” he added.

The council attributes “great value to Gregorian chant, without excluding other genres of sacred music from the celebration,” as well as to the organ, he said. The use of other instruments is permitted as long as the instruments are suitable for sacred use “and truly contribute to the edification of the faithful,” he added, citing “Sacrosanctum Concilium.”

Because inculturation was part of the council’s reform, including in the field of sacred music, the Council Fathers underlined the importance of taking the musical traditions of different cultures seriously into consideration, making every practical effort to promote traditional music.

The formation and practice of sacred music should be encouraged in seminaries, novitiates and other Catholic institutions, he said, while composers of sacred music must “know and preserve the musical heritage of the Church.”

To guarantee the “dignity and excellence” of new compositions, they should be “at the service of the liturgy, while respecting contemporary sensibilities and the different cultural traditions, so as ‘purify worship from ugliness of style, from distasteful forms of expression, from uninspired musical texts which are not worthy of the great act that is being celebrated,’” Pope Leo said, quoting from St. John Paul II’s 2003 document on sacred music.

“Dear brothers and sisters, the Fathers of the Church held liturgical singing in great esteem as a symbol of ecclesial communion,” Pope Leo said, asking that “we join together in love, and — in the words of St. Ignatius of Antioch — ‘with one voice sing to the Father through Jesus Christ.’”



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can start seeking
opportunities to be
promoters of peace,
promoters of
friendship and
love among all."*

— Pope Leo XIV



Catholic Schools — Freedom, Faith and Formation

Back to School 2026-2027

Eighth-grade students at St. Augustine School, Covington, raise the flag, Aug. 18, the day before the official first day of school. At St. Augustine School, each year eighth-graders gather a day early to learn and practice their special roles as leaders of the school.



Freedom — the fruit of a life ordered to God

Most Rev. John Iffert
Bishop of Covington

Today I want to sing the praises of those of you who are excited to return for another year of school. You are my “tribe!”

There is good reason for your excitement to get back to the books, your community, and to daily Masses and prayers. It can be a great benefit to your vocation to holiness. Though the summer break brings greater liberty for many, the Doctors of the Catholic Church are unanimous in teaching that it is formation, discipline (gasp), and holiness of life that *really* sets a person free.

For St. Augustine, people find freedom in loving the highest good. God created the human heart to love God and neighbor, so the more we love God, the freer we become. Choosing and loving the source of all goodness is the royal path to joy and happiness.

Education in every virtue and the development of good habits, St. Thomas Aquinas teaches, promotes our ability to choose the highest good. A piano player, he would argue, becomes more free, not less free, through many years of diligent training and practice. The person who has not spent this effort is completely unfree (even unable) to play



Bishop John Iffert

a Rachmaninov concerto. The player who has developed virtuosity through labor, however, can play with expression and originality. She has a freedom that a non-musician does not even understand. The same is true of athletes, artists, and those who would be saints. This is something called “freedom for excellence” not just meager absence of restraint.

This kind of “freedom for” — freedom with divine purpose — is the fruit of friendship with Christ, says St. Catherine of Sienna. The more we belong to God, the greater our truest liberty, she says. St. Theresa of Avila agrees. It is selfishness and willfulness that enslave us, she teaches.

Freedom begins from an interior life with God, and springs from growth in holiness and the beginning of a life in service to God. Growth in faithful under-

standing and prayer (like the formation we receive in Catholic Schools and Parish Schools of Religion) lead us to deeper relationship with God — the source of true freedom. As we allow ourselves to become increasingly reliant on God more than ourselves, St. Therese of Lisieux writes, we will come to trust God more. This trust in God’s mercy, she

says, is what finally leads the Christian person to freedom and to lightness of heart. Dependence on self leads to anxiety; trust in God’s mercy, to freedom and relief.

The kind of liberty we have on summer break, then — the freedom to choose a later bedtime or to spend more time at the pool — is not real freedom at all. It is merely less restraint. Freedom is more than the power to choose for oneself. It is the power, formed by truth and grace, to choose the good — to choose God’s will.

And freedom is not the gift of governments or constitutions. Even the Declaration of Independence of the 13 colonies that became the United States of America affirms “that they [human beings] are *endowed by their Creator* with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness” (emphasis mine). Freedom is God’s gift, and through growth in virtue and faith in Christ, we embrace that gift and become increasingly free.

That connection between **Freedom, Faith and Formation** is deeply Catholic: faith reveals the truth, formation shapes the person toward the truth, and freedom is the fruit of a life ordered toward God.

Welcome back to another school year. Our Catholic schools and parish faith formation programs are ways that we respond to God’s ongoing command to “Set my people free!” The freedom you are looking for is coming to find you in the person of Jesus Christ. It is all about Jesus! Enjoy!

Nurtured with faith, Catholic schools are a great place for students to learn and grow

Kendra McGuire
Superintendent of Schools

The new school year is upon us and ever since the seasonal school supplies showed up in the stores, we have been preparing for the first day of school. First, we wrestle with the reality that summer is passing quickly. Then we begin checking off the supply lists and making sure our children have properly fitted uniforms and shoes.

For teachers and principals, the beginning of the year is similar to parents and students. Classroom decorations are purchased, materials for teaching are placed carefully around the room, and grade-books and curriculum materials are prepared. In addition to these preparations, the teachers and principals of the Diocese of Covington Catholic schools



Kendra McGuire

also come together to celebrate Mass. On August 5th, the Cathedral was filled with educators who have answered the call to serve in the ministry of Catholic education. Our voices were powerful as we lifted them to God, filling the space with joy, praising God and asking His blessings upon the new school year.

This Mass is a powerful reminder of our primary mission, which is to share the teachings of Jesus Christ with every child who enters our schools. We are called to help them know God, to love Him and others, and that He created each of them for a purpose. By placing Jesus first, we trust that He will help us carry out this mission while providing us with the gifts we need to help our students strive for excellence in their academics and extracurricular activities.

As parents, our preparations for the new school year should also center around Jesus. We should be attending Mass, where we praise God and lift our school year prayers to Him. We need to pray throughout the day, every day, in personal prayer and together with our families. As the primary educators of our children, we need to teach them the importance of faith, which will be reinforced by the faculty and staff of their Catholic school.

This is what makes Catholic school communities great places to grow and learn. They are communities of faith. Communities that are united in our love for Jesus, where the faculty, staff, parents, students, and volunteers are all striving to live as Jesus taught us.

As we begin this new year, we must remember that the best preparation for each school day is prayer and time with Jesus, followed by all the other tasks. So let the words of St. Paul be a reminder to each of us as school begins, “Be watchful, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. Do everything in love.” (1 Cor 16:13-14)

The vocation and formation of the catechist: Catholic education and the mission of the Church in America’s 250th year

Isaak Isaak

Director of the Office of Catechesis & Evangelization

To all catechists, teachers, parents, families, parish catechetical leaders and faith formation groups: welcome to a new school year.

Although summer always seems to pass more quickly than we expect, the staff of the Office of Catechesis & Evangelization hopes that you have enjoyed some time for rest and renewal. We want you to know how deeply we value your service to the Church in the Diocese of Covington. Through your dedication and generosity, the Gospel continues to be proclaimed and lived in our parishes, schools and homes.

As we begin this academic year, we entrust each of you to the maternal care of the Blessed Virgin Mary. May she intercede for you before her Son, Jesus Christ, and assist you in the sacred work of handing on the faith. May she help you teach in a way that is both systematic and organic: systematic in presenting the truths of faith with clarity and coherence, and organic in connecting those truths to the real lives and needs of the people entrusted to your care.

As St. Paul reminds us: “How are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone proclaiming him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’”

(Rom 10:14-15)

This year offers a unique opportunity for reflection. As the United States commemorates its 250th anniversary, Catholics can look with gratitude upon the remarkable contribution that Catholic education and catechesis have made to our nation’s history. For nearly as long as America has existed, Catholic educators and catechists have labored to form generations of believers who contribute not only to the life of the Church but also to the flourishing of American society.

From the earliest Catholic communities in Maryland and Pennsylvania to the growth of parish schools throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Catholic education emerged from a profound conviction: that faith and reason belong together and that the formation of young people must include both intellectual excellence and moral virtue. Immigrant families, often possessing few material resources, sacrificed greatly to build schools, convents and parish centers where their children could receive an education firmly rooted in the Catholic faith.



Isaak Isaak

The history of Catholic education in the United States is also a testament to the extraordinary sacrifices of religious sisters, brothers and priests. Their dedication established one of the largest educational systems in the world. Long before Catholic schools were widely recognized for academic excellence, they existed primarily as centers of evangelization and discipleship. Their mission was to help young people know Jesus Christ, participate fully in the sacramental life of the Church, and live as witnesses to the Gospel in society.

Today, while the structures of Catholic education have evolved, that mission remains unchanged. Whether in Catholic schools, parish religious education programs, youth ministry, marriage preparation, OCIA or adult faith formation, the Church continues to fulfill Christ’s com-

mand to “make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19).

Central to this mission is catechesis. The National Catechetical Directory describes catechesis as encompassing all those activities that help individuals grow in their faith within a community of believers. Catechesis is not merely the transmission of information; it is the formation

(Continued on page 12)

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Catholic education and the mission of the Church in America’s 250th year

of disciples. It seeks to make faith living, conscious, and active through instruction, prayer, worship, community and service.

At the heart of catechesis stands the catechist. Throughout American history, countless men and women have answered God’s call to serve as catechists. Some taught in classrooms, others in parish halls, family homes or mission territories. Many were volunteers who gave generously of their time and talents simply because they loved Jesus Christ and desired to share that love with others. Their legacy continues today in every catechist who opens the Scriptures, prepares lessons, accompanies families or helps another person encounter the Lord.

Yet faith is handed on through more than words alone. The most effective catechists are first and foremost disciples. They are men and women whose lives reveal a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, nourished through prayer, Scripture, the sacraments and participation in the life of the Church. Their witnesses often teach more profoundly than any lesson plan.

Because of this sacred responsibility, catechists must continually deepen their own formation. As the National Catechetical Directory reminds us, “The response to this call includes willingness to give time and talent, not only to catechizing others, but to one’s own continued growth in faith and understanding” (NCD, 206).

Good intentions alone, while necessary, are not sufficient for effective catechetical ministry. Catechists need theological knowledge, spiritual maturity, pedagogical skill and pastoral sensitivity. Ongoing formation enables them to communicate the faith accurately, confidently, and compellingly within an increasingly complex cultural environment.

During the Franciscan University of Steubenville Catechetical Institute Orientation Workshops in 2024, Dr. Mark Ginter emphasized the importance of lifelong learning in the vocation of the catechist. Lifelong learners become more effective witnesses because they remain open to a deeper understanding of Catholic doctrine, sacred

scripture, liturgy, morality, educational methodology and the contemporary issues that affect those they serve.

The Diocese of Covington remains committed to supporting this ongoing formation. Through our partnership with the Franciscan University Catechetical Institute, high-quality catechetical training is available at no cost to participants. Foundational certification coursework includes studies in basic Catholic teachings, sacred scripture, liturgy and sacraments and Christian morality. Additional opportunities for theological study through institutions such as Thomas More University, the Athenaeum of Ohio, Xavier University and Mount St. Joseph University further enrich the knowledge and skills of those engaged in catechetical ministry.

The Catechetical Institute continues to provide exceptional resources for certification and adult faith formation. Through collaboration with priests, deacons, religious and lay leaders throughout our Diocese, participants benefit from both nationally recognized catechetical scholarship and the practical wisdom of fellow catechists serving in our five deaneries.

As we celebrate America’s 250th anniversary, we should recognize that the future of both the Church and our society depends significantly upon how we form the next generation. Catholic education has always sought to do more than prepare students for careers. It seeks to prepare saints, faithful citizens, servant leaders, loving spouses and parents and disciples capable of bringing Christ into every aspect of culture and public life.

This mission cannot be accomplished by schools or parishes alone. Catechesis flourishes through the partnership of family, parish, school and the broader faith community. Parents remain the first teachers of the faith, while catechists and educators serve as indispensable partners in the work of evangelization and formation.

As we begin this school year, let us give thanks to all those who answer the call to catechetical ministry. Through their dedication, generosity and witness, the Gospel continues to be proclaimed to new generations. They stand within

a long and noble tradition of Catholic education that has shaped both the Church and our nation for centuries.

Indeed, the words of St. Paul remain true today: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

May God bless all catechists, teachers, parents and faith formation leaders as they continue the mission of forming disciples for Christ and building his Kingdom in our Diocese and throughout our nation.

Isaak Abraham Isaak is Director of the Office of Catechesis & Evangelization.

Meet the new school administrators as they make way for upcoming year

Staff report

For the 2026-2027 school year, five grade and high schools in the Diocese of Covington are welcoming five new administrators into their roles. Here they are as each jump into a new school year ahead.



Erin Ludwig

St. Cecilia School, Independence — Erin Ludwig

Erin Ludwig brings more than eight years of experience in Catholic education to her new role as principal at St. Cecilia School, Independence. A dedicated educator, she previously served as a kindergarten and second-grade teacher in the Diocese of Covington



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BACK TO SCHOOL

schools, fostering academic excellence and faith formation in young learners. She also served as the former lead teacher for sacramental preparation for First Holy Communion and first reconciliation at St. Cecilia School.

Mrs. Ludwig earned her Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education and her Master of Arts in Education from Eastern Kentucky University. Throughout her career, she has remained committed to creating nurturing learning environments where students can grow academically, spiritually and personally.

An active parishioner at St. William/St. John Mission Parish in Williamstown, Ky., Mrs. Ludwig and her husband are raising their two children in the Catholic faith. Her strong commitment to Catholic education is rooted in both her professional experience and her family’s active involvement in parish life.

As principal, Mrs. Ludwig looks forward to continuing the school’s mission to form students for life by providing an engaging, high-quality education guided by the teachings of the Catholic faith. She is dedicated to creating a community where students are inspired to live out the Gospel message of Jesus Christ through faith, service, leadership and academic achievement. Mrs. Ludwig is eager and optimistic to start her new role with the St. Cecilia School and church community.



Ellen Beiersdorfer

St. Joseph School, Crescent Springs — Ellen Beiersdorfer

Ellen Beiersdorfer has been appointed interim principal of St. Joseph School, Crescent Springs, for the 2026-2027 school year.

Mrs. Beiersdorfer brings 20 years of experience in Catholic education to the role. She began her career at St. Joseph School, where she spent eight years teaching middle school social studies and language arts.

She then served for seven years within the Archdiocese of Cincinnati as both a middle school teacher and assistant principal.

In 2021, Mrs. Beiersdorfer returned to St. Joseph School, teaching for two years before being named assistant principal, a position she has held for the past three years.

Mrs. Beiersdorfer lives in Lakeside Park with her husband and daughter, who attends St. Joseph School. The family are active members of St. Joseph Parish and enjoy participating in parish life through Mass and community events.

“I am honored to serve as interim principal for the coming school year,” Mrs. Beiersdorfer said. “St. Joseph School has been a special part of my life for many years, and I am grateful for the opportunity to lead this faith-filled community. I look forward to working with our dedicated faculty and staff, supportive families, and parish community as we continue to help our students grow academically, spiritually, and in service to others.”

Drawing on her years of teaching and leadership experience, Mrs. Beiersdorfer is committed to fostering academic excellence while nurturing students in the Catholic faith. She looks forward to leading the St. Joseph School community as it continues its mission of forming students who know, love and serve the Lord.



Margaret Klee

St. Patrick School, Maysville — Margaret Klee

St. Patrick School, Maysville, is proud to announce Margaret Klee as its new principal. Bringing more than two decades of dedicated teaching experience — including 10 years in public education and 13 years in Catholic education — Ms. Klee enters this leadership role with a wealth of knowledge, passion and vision. In addition to her administrative duties, she will

remain active in the classroom, continuing to share her passion for numbers by teaching a mathematics classes each day.

Ms. Klee plans to center the upcoming academic year around St. Patrick School’s motto: “Pursuing Knowledge, Serving Others, Living Faith.” Driven by these three pillars, her primary goals are to cultivate an engaging environment where students become curious, lifelong learners, to teach them to recognize their blessings and serve those in need, and to guide them as they grow closer to God in their daily lives.

Her educational background from Morehead State University, where she earned both a Bachelor of University Studies and a Master of Secondary Education with an emphasis in Mathematics, provides a strong foundation to support academic excellence across all grade levels.

For Ms. Klee, leading St. Patrick School is much more than a career milestone — it is a homecoming. She is a proud third-generation graduate of St. Patrick School, and her son, Ethan, recently carried on the family tradition as a fourth-generation graduate. As an active member of St. Patrick Church, Ms. Klee expresses deep gratitude for the unwavering support the parish and local community continuously extend to the school’s students and staff, and she looks forward to building upon the school’s rich tradition of excellence and faith.



Terry Bray

Sts. Peter and Paul School, California — Terry Bray

Terry Bray will be the new principal at Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic School in California, Ky. Mr. Bray lives in Alexandria with his wife Patti, married for almost 40 years. They regularly attend St. Joseph Church in Cold Spring and enjoy camping with their two dogs, Charli and Susie. They have four adult children and 11 grandchildren who live close by.

(Continued on page 14)



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New school administrators

(Continued from page 13)

Mr. Bray grew up in the Northern Kentucky area and upon graduation from high school served in the Marine Corp for eight years. He then went on to become a police officer for the city of Ft. Thomas. After a career in law enforcement, Mr. Bray became a teacher.

Mr. Bray will be bringing with him 24 years of experience teaching Social Studies and Religion. He taught for 12 years at Holy Cross High School, Latonia, and two years at Holy Cross Elementary. The last three years have been at Sts. Peter and Paul. He received his bachelor's degree at Northern Kentucky University and his master's degree from Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Mr. Bray has enjoyed his time as a teacher for the students in the Sts. Peter and Paul community. He is excited and honored to be its new principal.

Villa Madonna Academy, Villa Hills — Joe Cordonnier

Joe Cordonnier — known as Mr. C. — succeeds Pamela McQueen, who will transition full-time into her role as the academy's Executive Director after serving as principal for 30 years and holding both leadership positions simultaneously for the past nine years.

Following a comprehensive nationwide search, the academy found its ideal leader within its own community. Mr. Cordonnier



Joe Cordonnier

brings 25 years of dedicated service to Villa as an educator, administrator, coach and parent. He embodies the school's Catholic, Benedictine values.

"Joe's longstanding commitment to our students, families, and values makes him exceptionally well prepared to guide Villa into its next chapter," said Mrs. McQueen. "He treasures the relationships, traditions and spirit that make Villa such a special place."

Mr. Cordonnier earned a Master of Education in Education Administration from Xavier University and a Master of Education in Secondary Education from Northern Kentucky University. He has served as Villa's dean of academics and assistant principal for the past eight years. His commitment to Catholic education was recognized in 2019 when he received the prestigious Diocesan Excellence in Teaching Award.

Beyond the classroom, Mr. Cordonnier coached the Villa Vikings track and field team for 24 years. He is also the proud parent of two Villa alumni, Eli ('23) and Sophie ('25).

"Villa Madonna Academy has been my home for the past 25 years as a teacher, coach and an assistant principal," said Mr. Cordonnier. "My family grew here, my passion for Catholic education grew here, and my beloved Benedictine community is rooted here. It is a dream come true to have the opportunity to lead as the principal of this awe-inspiring academy."



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BACK TO SCHOOL

New mathematics curriculum sets the standard across diocesan schools

Emily Urlage
Contributor

Beginning in September of last school year, a team of diocesan kindergarten through 8th grade teachers set out to produce a set of Diocesan mathematics standards that would provide consistency, coherence and rigor across all Diocesan schools. I had the privilege of working alongside this dedicated group of educators, who brought an impressive range of classroom experience, content knowledge and commitment to our shared mission.

The standards and accompanying resources composed by the team provide a coherent, vertically aligned framework for mathematics teaching and learning in the Diocese of Covington. The standards focus on building strong foundational skills, logical reasoning and deep conceptual understanding. To further support educators, the teams meticulously “unwrapped” each standard to provide their colleagues with clear and actionable tools for planning, instruction and assessment.

With the standards and accompanying resources now complete, the focus has shifted to classroom implementation. To support schools with this implementation I have begun visiting each diocesan school alongside faculty partners from Thomas More University. The goal of this implementation phase is to walk all mathematics teachers through the complete suite of resources, including the updated standards, unwrap standards documents and proficiency scales while also providing guidance on how to integrate these tools into daily instruction.

This work would not have been possible without the expertise, effort and dedication of the diocesan teacher teams. Their leadership in this process ensures that the students of the Diocese of Covington will continue to receive an exceptional education rooted in faith and academic excellence.

Emily Urlage is Director of Curriculum and Instruction for the Diocese of Covington, Ky

Bailey photo



Students from Holy Cross High School, Latonia, take notes during their first day of school, Aug. 14.

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BACK TO SCHOOL

New director of inclusive education shares hopes for the future of inclusive ed

Bella Bailey

Multimedia Correspondent

The Diocese of Covington's Schools Office has hired Mike Jacks, former St. Catherine of Sienna School, Ft. Thomas, principal, to be the new director of inclusive education for the Diocese of Covington. This role is funded by a grant from the Fire Foundation of Northern Kentucky, which seeks to foster inclusion for children with learning differences in the Diocese of Covington schools.

Having spent a little over one month in the role, Mr. Jacks has had an opportunity to begin exploring what inclusive education looks like for Diocesan schools. "We have a great need in our Diocese to provide some opportunity for kids that learn differently, an opportunity to stay in our schools," he said.

"The immediate goal for me is to create policy and docu-



Mike Jacks

ments that are consistent across, so that principals don't feel out there alone," said Mr. Jacks. "I want to be a resource, whether it be helping create alternative learning plans, setting goals, educating the teachers on how to do that, bringing in professional developments."

For Mr. Jacks, success does not manifest in test scores or trophies, it manifests in low-barrier, Catholic education, for any student that wants to learn about God, in spite of their differences. "If a family wants their child with needs in, and a Catholic school can accommodate those needs then the number of those students will increase, and if it increases then that's what I mark as success," he said, "more kids whose parents want them in our schools, get to be in our schools, and get to finish not just preschool through eighth, but all the way through."

Mr. Jacks has extensive experience as both a teacher and

administrator in the Diocese of Covington, having taught at St. Anthony School, Taylor Mill, before becoming principal, a tenure that spanned 24 years. Following his time at St. Anthony, Mr. Jacks spent nine years as the principal at Immaculate Heart of Mary School, Burlington, before moving to the public school system as a principal for five years. It was these five years that Mr. Jacks credits as having bolstered his understanding of inclusive education.

"The school that I worked at had a unit for special needs, and my toolbox grew, tremendous growth, on the legalities behind special ed and how all that works in the State of Kentucky," he said. What brought Mr. Jacks back to the Diocesan system of schools was the opportunity to speak on matters of math, science and reading, but on the importance of faith.

"I missed the opportunity to do faith things with kids, and what was really a gift that I felt that I had was bringing faith to all the kids and teachers I worked with," he said.

Who were the Carrolls of America: Young men, educated in France, who influenced a new nation

Christopher Guntz

Catholic Review, OSV News

Unable to receive a Catholic education in the British colonies in North America, three young men from wealthy Maryland families were sent to Saint-Omer, France, to study at the College of the English Jesuits.

Daniel Carroll of Rock Creek (1730-1796), his brother John Carroll (1735-1815), and their cousin Charles Carroll of Carrollton (1737-1832), could not have known when they studied in a small town in northern France that they would ultimately wield significant influence in the burgeoning United States of America, shaping government and Church in the late 18th century.

Daniel was one of five men to sign both the Articles of

Confederation and the U.S. Constitution. John became a Jesuit priest and was appointed the first bishop of the Diocese of Baltimore, then the only diocese in the nation. Charles was the only Catholic signer of the Declaration of Independence.

Their enduring legacy is felt not only in the U.S. as the country marks the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

The Saint-Omer Foundation for Transatlantic Values keeps alive the memory of the School of the Jesuits and its connection to the U.S., especially Maryland.

Édouard-François de Lencquesaing, the foundation's president, said that much of what happened 300 years ago at the school is forgotten in both countries. In an interview

from his home in Saint-Omer, he said the training in humanism of the Carrolls and other influential families was transformative.

"There's a correlation between what happened in history a long time ago and the challenges that we have today in our society," de Lencquesaing told the Catholic Review, the news outlet of the Archdiocese of Baltimore. "And to rebuild the connection between this tradition and the values built up by those gents in Saint-Omer is very structurally important today, where our societies are more or less in a crisis and the democracy is in danger. And I think we can find in history some keys to address today with courage those challenges."

(Continued on page 18)



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Federal tax credit scholarship program serves as victory for school choice in Kentucky, work still to be done

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

With the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) signed in 2025, a victory was won for school choice in Kentucky. The new Federal Scholarship Tax Credit Program is set to begin, allowing donors to qualified Scholarship Granting Organizations (SGOs) to receive tax credits up to \$1,700 per household beginning in 2027.

Beth Ruehlmann, director of development for Catholic schools in the Diocese of Covington, who also serves on the board of EdChoice Kentucky, defines the program as a “no-cost way to support Catholic education.” Beginning in January, donating households will be able to receive it back on their 2027 taxes.

Ms. Ruehlmann announced that the Diocese of Covington will be beginning its own qualified SGO in 2027 that donors will be able to contribute to, allowing them to directly sponsor diocesan families. Families needing tuition assistance would then be able to apply to receive the money towards tuition.

While eligibility may vary somewhat as the program continues to establish, the program is “very generous,” according to Ms. Ruehlmann, with primary requirements being that the child is set to attend a K-12 school in Kentucky and the household income is less than 300 percent of the area’s median income. The median income in the Greater Cincinnati area is \$89,000.

Ms. Ruehlmann stressed that the program “relies on donors.” While the federal government does credit donor families, SGOs can only give to families the money that they have, and each SGO is privately funded by this generosity.

The United States treasury is set to finalize more details about the tax credit program in September. More information for both donors and prospective families in Kentucky can be found online at <https://www.edchoiceky.com>.



On the first day of school, a young boy hangs his bookbag in his locker. A red and yellow sticker on the locker door reads “I love school choice!”

The Carrolls of America

(Continued from page 16)

While the Carrolls went abroad for school because they were excluded in America, they found inclusion in France. “Through education, courage, cleverness and so on, they were able to be around the table and to be acting positively with the group.” And even as the only Catholic among the signers of the Declaration, Charles worked to ensure that the fledgling nation promoted religious freedom at the core of the new democracy.

De Lencquesaing noted that one of the very early Carrolls, Charles the Settler, changed his family motto to “Anywhere, so long as there be freedom.”

The Transatlantic Foundation will commemorate the 250th birthday of the U.S. with a number of events this year. Music will feature prominently, with concerts by the Orchestre d’Harmonie de Saint-Omer featuring American standards such the Gershwins and others, the local annual jazz festival will focus on American jazz instead of European and classical music concerts will feature American composers.

More importantly, the foundation will host several conferences regarding the Carrolls and their influence, featuring the doctoral thesis work of Emilie Mitran, who has written extensively on American and French history.

The conferences will discuss the work of Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson in France and how Charles Carroll contributed to the independence process.

The Carrolls from the early days of the country still have an impact on their descendants, generations later.

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BACK TO SCHOOL



A bronze statue honoring Charles Carroll of Carrollton, Md., as a student in France is seen in Saint-Omer, France, near the site of the historic English Jesuit college he attended as a youth. It was dedicated in 2021.

Charles Carroll Carter Jr., about seven or eight generations descended from Daniel Carroll of Rock Creek, said there are two key phrases in the Declaration of Independence: “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” and “our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor.”

In an interview in his Washington apartment, he said the founders intentionally repeated the triple pattern toward the beginning and the end of the document.

“It just is so clear to me that they knew exactly what they were doing,” he said. “They didn’t know how it was all going to turn out, but they knew what they were doing because they trusted each other, they worked together.”

A member of St. Matthew Cathedral Parish in Washington, Carter now works in traffic planning and consultation. He said those stuck in traffic may not realize that when the founders pledged their lives, fortunes and sacred honor, they would never have predicted the growth and hectic pace that could stifle people’s ability to enjoy life and liberty and pursue happiness.

If the country expects to make it another 50, 100 or 150 years, “however many years it’s going to be, can we make it if we have this terrible congestion? Can we make it if we’re delivering this terrible pollution?” he asked.

His father, Charles Carroll Carter Sr., wrote a book, with maps, that chronicles “Creating Capitol Hill: Place, Proprietors and People,” published by the United States Capitol Historical Society. The book details what is considered the “untold story” of the Carrolls of Maryland and their work in building the Capitol.

Harper Wright, descended by several generations from Charles Carroll of Carrollton, has a number of items in his study connected to “the Signer,” and so he is “regularly reminded of his accomplishments and what he risked 250 years ago.”

However, he noted, it is important to remember the Carrolls’ values and work in the context of their times. “We must remember that they were ordinary human beings with faults and flaws. Principles such as justice and equality were challenged then and are still challenged today. It can be as difficult today, as it was years ago, to stand up for ‘self-evident’ principles while maintaining a perspective that encompasses the wider community,” he said.

Wright has lived in the U.S. and six other countries. Since 2020, he has lived in Australia, where he serves on the pastoral council at St. Paul’s in Moss Vale, New South Wales.

Reflecting on the fact that the Carrolls had to go to another country for education, Wright said that from his international experience, “we have seen what appears to be a greater value in lesser-developed countries for education and hard work. ... Many migrants demonstrate great determination during very challenging journeys to reach Europe or the USA.”

Archbishop William E. Lori, 15th successor of Archbishop John Carroll as head of the nation’s premiere see, preached at a Mass in Saint-Omer Oct. 15, 2017, while commemorat-

ing the reopening of the chapel of the College of the Jesuits as a community arts center. “It was here at Saint-Omer,” Archbishop Lori said, “that these young men who would go on to play such important roles in early days of my country, received a splendid education, rooted in an authentic Christian humanism, capturing the wisdom of ancient Greece and Rome while transforming it through the reasoned faith of the medieval masters.”

He noted that John Carroll received his calling to the Jesuit priesthood while at the school. “As the first Bishop of Baltimore, it would be John Carroll’s mission to find the path for the Catholic faith to take root and grow in the new republic, a wholly new environment for the faith, an environment of religious freedom laced with deep anti-Catholic sentiments.

“His formation at Saint-Omer helped make him a wise and astute leader and to this day we are building on the foundations John Carroll so carefully laid,” Archbishop Lori said at the Mass.

Christopher Gunty is associate publisher and editor of Catholic Review Media, the publishing arm of the Archdiocese of Baltimore. This story was originally published by Catholic Review and distributed through a partnership with OSV News.





Msgr. Gerald Twaddell, rector of Thomas More University, Crestview Hills, leads the Diocesan school community in virtual prayer as 38 schools across the Diocese opened their doors to students, faculty and staff, over the last two weeks.

Scan the QR code to join Msgr. Twaddell in prayer for a safe and productive school year, where students come to learn not just math and science, but the love of God for them.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

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The Finance Office of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Covington invites qualified, actively practicing Catholics to apply for the full time position of Payroll Coordinator. This important Curia role requires a personable, self-starting individual who likes numbers and detail, and who is good with both. This position calls for someone who will thrive in a fast-paced work environment. Requirements include a general working knowledge of payroll operations and basic bookkeeping, and some prior experience with payroll software. Applicants should submit a resume with cover letter and compensation history, along with references including contact email addresses, by mail, fax or e-mail to:
Stephen Koplyay, SPHR, 1125 Madison Avenue, Covington, KY 41011-3115; fax 859/392-1589; SKoplyay@CovDio.org.

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The Diocese of Covington invites individuals with a degree and background in Accounting to apply for the position of Internal Auditor. This position reports directly to the Chief Financial Officer. This position updates/maintains the existing Parish and High School audit programs, schedules and performs parish/high school audits, writes audit reports, as well as other duties in the Finance Office. Minimal requirements include a degree in Accounting with at least two years of experience, including auditing. CPA licensure is preferred.
Submit cover letter, resume, salary history, and five references with email address to: Stephen Koplyay by email or fax. SKoplyay@CovDio.org or 859-392-1589.
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Those interested in contributing to the successful operation of the school lunch program and ensuring the provision of nutritious meals to our students, please go to: www.covdio.org/employment, School Related Openings, Employment Application Non-Teacher, and send completed application to Diocese of Covington, ATTN: Laura Hatfield SLP Director, 1125 Madison Avenue, Covington, KY 41011

**BUILDING AND PROPERTY
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The Diocese of Covington, KY is accepting applications for the full-time position of Building and Property Custodian at the Offices of the Diocesan Curia. Our building and the surrounding property requires the attention of an individual who will develop a sense of personal responsibility for its appearance and well-being. The position will involve a regular daily, weekly, and monthly schedule of routine cleaning and upkeep duties within the building and the chapel; setup of conference rooms; regular as well as seasonal upkeep of walkways and other exterior features; and other duties as needed. The successful candidate will be a personable self-starter who is dependable, trustworthy, and capable of prioritizing duties as circumstances require. Please contact Stephen Koplyay, SPHR to begin the application process: skoplyay@covdio.org, or call 859-392-1500.

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT
The Diocese of Covington is accepting applications for the full-time Curia position of Administrative Assistant. The Office of Catechesis and Evangelization facilitates ministries such as adult formation, catechist and religion teacher certification, marriage preparation, wedding anniversary vespers, divorced or separated ministry, family ministry, young adult ministry, and Catholic scouting. The Administrative Assistant provides a range of support to the program staff including data collection and management across a wide area; project logistics, coordination, and timelines; maintenance of the office master calendar; regularly updating the office web page; religion teacher certification status updates; etc. The position requires a detail-oriented practicing Roman Catholic with exceptional interpersonal and general office skills, including MS Office experience. Interested individuals are asked to send a cover letter, resume with compensation history, and at least five references with contact email addresses to Stephen Koplyay, SPHR at skoplyay@covdio.org

VMA STEM Wing

(Continued from page 1)

ty first walked in the newly renovated space.

"This new STEM spot," he said, "it encourages us to create, to innovate, to learn, to enjoy and to dream. It compels us to do those things ... what I like about science is that when you study it, you start seeing it all around you ... But beyond that, which is probably most important, is you start seeing the order in the universe when you study science, you start seeing intelligent design, you start seeing God's hand at work, and this STEM wing is going to help us in that endeavor. What a blessing."

Bishop John Iffert who was present at the dedication, blessed the space. After his blessing, he reflected on the Gospel of Matthew, where Christian people are described as the "salt of the earth."

"Jesus teaches that we are the flavor and the joy of life," Bishop Iffert said. "Jesus, with these words, extends that mission to all of us in everything we do. In the face of the many problems of the world, like violence, materialism, poverty, moral relativism, Jesus challenged us to ask, 'What can I do to share God's love in the world?'"

"Christians are called to be light to the world," he said, "and the world will be impacted for better or for worse by the way we live our lives. ... When we misuse creation and its scientific principles, without any regard for the wisdom God has planted within us, we add to the chaos. But when we imitate Christ's love, mercy and generosity — when we use our minds to effectively serve the dignity of our brothers and sisters — well, then we glorify our heavenly Father."

Looking for something to do?



Check out the diocesan calendar online now at <https://covdio.org/calendar/> to keep up with what's happening in the Diocese of Covington!

FINANCE DIRECTOR

Villa Madonna Academy seeks a mission-centered Finance Director to lead the Business Office and steward an approximately \$6 million annual budget.

- Core responsibilities: Oversee budgeting, accounting, reporting, tuition and financial aid, contracts and compliance, risk management, capital planning, and strategic financial guidance.
- Ideal candidate: Bachelor's degree, 5+ years of progressive financial leadership, strong budgeting and controls expertise, clear communication skills, and alignment with Catholic Benedictine values; CPA preferred.
- Position details: Full-time, on-site at least three days per week, salary of \$60,000–\$70,000, with immediate starting date
- Growth Potential: This role may develop into a COO position.

Located on a scenic campus in Villa Hills, KY, Villa Madonna is a private, Catholic, K-12 Benedictine school with a Montessori early education program.

Qualified candidates, please direct cover letter and resume to Board Vice Chair Mark Wolff, map2mark@gmail.com.



Obituary

Sister Christa Marie Fox, SND

Patricia Joan was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, on Sept. 1, 1932, the only child of George and Mildred (Breig) Cavanaugh. Patricia experienced significant loss early in life. Her father died when she was only two years old, and her beloved mother passed away when she was 10. Her mother had remarried to a close family friend, George Fox, who became a devoted and loving father to Patricia. Following her mother's death, he legally adopted her, and she proudly carried the Fox family name thereafter.

Patricia attended Notre Dame Academy from 1946 to 1950. Drawn to a life of faith, she entered the novitiate on Feb. 2, 1950, graduating from Notre Dame Academy later that same year. After Sister Christa Marie made her first profession in 1952, she attended Villa Madonna College and soon began ministry in Catholic education. Her teaching assignments took her to Birmingham, Alabama; St. Augustine, Covington; and St. Mary High School in Alexandria, Ky.

In 1961, Sister responded to a new call by pursuing studies at the Mayo Clinic School of Physical Therapy. Upon graduating in 1963, she began a 25-year ministry in health-care at St. Charles Care Center, Covington, Ky. There she combined professional skills with compassionate care to all her patients.

Sister Christa Marie's lifelong love for the Eucharist found its fulfillment in 1988 when she was invited to Rome to join the perpetual adoration community at the congregation's generalate. There, she embraced both prayer and service, faithfully caring for Sister Maria Hildegara, one of the Congregation's oldest sisters, to whom she was deeply devoted. Here, too, she was not only an adoration sister but



Sister Christa Marie Fox, SND

a very competent and highly appreciated physical therapist. The 23 years she spent in Rome remained among the most graced and treasured years of her life. Through prayer, and faithful witness, she deepened her relationship with God while supporting the universal mission of the Church.

In 2011, health concerns led Sister Christa Marie to return to her home province in Covington, Kentucky. Despite ongoing health challenges, she continued to serve her community. She became the sacristan at St. Joseph Heights, preparing for the liturgy and caring for the daily needs of the chapel. After retiring to Lourdes Hall in 2016, she continued to assist with the chapel there. Throughout her life, she sought new ways to share God's goodness and love with those around her.

After 74 years of religious life, Sister Christa Marie passed away peacefully on Aug. 13, 2026. She was preceded in death by her parents. May Sister Christa Marie now enjoy the peace and fullness of eternal life in the loving presence of our good and gracious God.

Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated Aug. 20 at Lourdes Hall, Covington with interment in the convent cemetery.



The Senior Resource Center is designed to inform, educate, and empower seniors and their families as they navigate the complexities of aging services. Our compassionate professionals offer expert guidance and support in every aspect of senior services, including:

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Scan the QR code for more information about the Senior Resource Center!



Protecting God's Children for Adults Safe Environment Trainings

For all employees and volunteers of the Diocese of Covington who in any way provide a safe environment for children.

Step 1: Contact parish/school institution leader to review the Policies and Procedures and fill out the Application and Acceptance Forms.

Step 2: Go to www.virtus.org and click on Registration. Follow the prompts to create an account and to request a background check. Selection.com is a secure site; the background check is posted on your account and you receive a copy if you request it during the registration process. You will sign up for a VIRTUS training class during the registration.

Step 3: Your account becomes active when your background check, VIRTUS session and Acceptance Form are posted on your account. You will receive 12 bulletins per year. You will receive e-mail notices at

system@pub.virtus.org unless your computer program blocks them.

Bulletins:

■ August bulletin: posted Sunday, Aug. 2; due Tuesday, Sept. 1.

The monthly e-mail reminder of a new bulletin posted will come from system@pub.virtus.org.

www.virtusonline.org, enter your user id and password.

If your account is suspended contact your primary location where you volunteer or are employed. Your primary location contact information is found under your Contact Tab.

VIRTUS Training:

■ Tuesday, Aug. 25, 6-8:30 p.m., St. Edward School cafeteria, Cynthiana

■ Thursday, Aug. 27, 6:30-9 p.m., Diocesan Catholic Children's Home, Ft. Mitchell

■ Tuesday, Sept. 1 6-8:30 p.m., St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring

■ Thursday, Sept. 3, 6-8:30 p.m., St. Joseph Parish, Parish Hall, Warsaw

■ Wednesday, Sept. 23 9-11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Wednesday, Sept. 23 9-11:30 a.m., 6-8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Thursday, Oct. 8 9-11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Thursday, Oct. 8 6-8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Tuesday, Oct. 20 9-11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Tuesday, Oct. 20 6-8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Wednesday, Nov. 4 9-11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Wednesday, Nov. 4 6-8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Wednesday, Dec. 9 9-11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Wednesday, Dec. 9 6-8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Thursday, Jan. 7 9-11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Thursday, Jan. 7 6-8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Wednesday, Jan. 20 9-11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Wednesday, Jan. 20 6-8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

Note: If your Training Tab is missing or you cannot access your account, contact your parish, school or institution.

For other difficulties, contact Lynn Weisgerber at (859) 392-1565 or lweisgerber@covdio.org

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NEWS BRIEFS

National/World

Pope, bishops mourn death of Polish pilgrims returning from Medjugorje

VATICAN CITY — Pope Leo XIV and church leaders in Poland and Hungary are mourning 12 Polish pilgrims killed in a bus crash in eastern Hungary while returning from the Marian shrine of Medjugorje. The bus, carrying 57 passengers, veered off a highway and overturned early Aug. 16 near Mezokeresztes. Hungarian prosecutors suspect the driver fell asleep due to fatigue, and a court ordered him detained for a month pending an investigation into negligent homicide. In a telegram sent on the pope’s behalf, Cardinal Pietro Parolin said the Holy Father is offering special prayers for those who “completed their earthly pilgrimage,” invoking Our Lady of Czestochowa for the grieving families. Bishops’ conference presidents Archbishop Tadeusz Wojda of Poland and Bishop János Székely of Hungary, alongside civic leaders from both nations, also expressed deep sorrow and solidarity, praying for comfort for the bereaved and a swift recovery for the dozens injured.

3 US-based leaders among 12 consultants named to Dicastery

NOTRE DAME, Ind. — Pope Leo XIV has appointed three U.S.-based consultants, all with ties to the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, to the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. They are among a dozen newly-named consultants to the Vatican department created by Pope Francis in 2016. The Holy See Press Office on Aug. 18 announced the appointments of the 12 including Father Emmanuel Katongole, a theology professor at the University of Notre Dame; Kathryn Koch, president and CEO of the Los Angeles-based international investment firm Trust Company of the West (TCW); and Clemens Sedmak, director of the Nanovic Institute for European Studies at University of Notre Dame. The dicastery supports the Church’s work in the areas of human dignity and human rights, economic justice, care for creation, migration and displacement, as well as peace, conflict and humanitarian crises.

Florida Catholic bishops push back on AG’s threat to school voucher program

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — The Catholic bishops of Florida issued a staunch defense of their ability to determine policies for Catholic schools after Florida Attorney General James

Uthmeier sent them a letter demanding that Catholic schools in the Sunshine State adopt religious exemptions to vaccine requirements or risk their ability to participate in the state’s school voucher program. Michael B. Sheedy, executive director of the Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops, wrote in an Aug. 7 letter to Uthmeier, which the organization published Aug. 17, “We are prepared to protect our students, defend our rights, and preserve religious freedom. While we are confident in our position, we remain willing to meet with you or your staff to see if there is a productive and amicable way to resolve our differences.” In his original letter, which was addressed to the FCCB, Uthmeier argued that Florida law required Catholic schools to make religious exemptions to their vaccine requirements. But in the FCCB letter responding to Uthmeier, Sheedy wrote that “the Catholic bishops in Florida do not have to justify to your office their position on Catholic teaching and their reasons for the current vaccine policies. They will, however, do so out of respect for you and your office and with the understanding and expectation that your office will respect the Catholic bishops’ constitutional rights and religious freedom.”

Vatican City mints new coins featuring face of Pope Leo XIV

VATICAN CITY — The Vatican has issued its first euro coin set featuring Pope Leo XIV, marking the start of his pontificate and the Jubilee Year of St. Francis of Assisi. The set includes coins bearing Pope Leo’s face and coat of arms, along with a commemorative five-euro coin depicting St. Francis renouncing his worldly possessions. It marks the 800th anniversary of the saint’s death. The Vatican had not featured a pope’s portrait on its coins since 2017, when Pope Francis asked that his image be removed. Vatican euro coins are popular with collectors because of limited minting quotas. The new set has a face value of 3.88 euros but is being sold for 39 euros (about \$45). Sister Raffaella Petrini said the Vatican Mint is “not merely a place of production, but also a repository of historical and economic memory because, through the processes of engraving, casting, and minting, it creates coins that imprint on metal a message of universal significance.” Sister Raffaella Petrini, a Franciscan Sister of the Eucharist, is president of the Governorate of Vatican City State. Italian artist Daniela Longo designed the new coins.

Church doctrine, not courts, define confession

PHOENIX — In a unanimous decision, Arizona’s Supreme Court upheld a broad definition of clergy-penitent privilege

July 30. While the case involved the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, widely known as the Mormon church, the ruling has implications for the Catholic Church’s defense of the seal of the confessional. The Arizona case, Doe v. Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, centers on a Latter-day Saints member, who had confessed to abusing his children in the context of the Mormon church’s formal repentance process. The plaintiffs sued the church along with individual clergy members for failing to report the abuse. The seven justices — six Republican appointees and one Democratic appointee — unanimously agreed that allowing the suits to proceed would violate the First Amendment. In his opinion for the court, Vice Chief Justice John R. Lopez IV argued that it is not up to the courts to define what qualifies as a “confession” or “confidential communication” within the context of that tradition. He wrote, “The First Amendment’s constraint on courts against resolving matters involving the interpretation of church discipline, doctrine and internal procedures extends to what qualifies as a ‘confession’ or ‘confidential communication’ under established customs and rules.” The Catholic dioceses of Arizona — Phoenix, Tucson and Gallup, New Mexico (which includes part of Arizona) — were among the groups that filed friend-of-the-court briefs in support of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Deadly school shooting sparks alarm in the Philippines

Mindanao, PHILIPPINES — A shooting in a Jesuit-run school in the Philippines, which saw a student kill a fellow student before killing himself, sparked shock and reignited alarm over juvenile delinquency and campus security. The incident inside a classroom at the Ateneo de Zamboanga University Junior School in Mindanao, southern Philippines, occurred on the morning of Aug. 18, according to police. The student not only shot a fellow student and killed himself but also livestreamed the incident on Facebook. The attacker was reportedly armed with a pistol and rifle. Several other students were injured in the attack and rushed to local hospitals for treatment, the authorities said. Zamboanga City Mayor Khymer Adan Olaso said preliminary information indicated the shooter wore a body camera. The video has since gone viral on various social media platforms. The school shooting is the second such incident in a Southeast Asian country in little over a week. On Aug. 7, a 14-year-old boy in Thailand killed his grandparents before shooting dead five more people at a school and then killing himself.

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All Saints Parish	82	75	7	\$53,114.32	\$53,800	(\$685.68)
Blessed Sacrament Parish	412	285	127	\$266,000.64	\$112,600	\$153,400.64
Cristo Rey Parish	81	150	(69)	\$32,825.00	\$68,600	(\$35,775.00)
Divine Mercy Parish	89	100	(11)	\$42,319.85	\$59,900	(\$17,580.15)
Holy Cross Parish	120	125	(5)	\$60,839.25	\$9,900	\$50,939.25
Holy Redeemer Parish	11	15	(4)	\$3,068.00	\$2,700	\$368.00
Holy Spirit Parish	135	170	(35)	\$109,237.85	\$48,300	\$60,937.85
Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish	269	305	(36)	\$157,358.50	\$171,100	(\$13,741.50)
Mary, Queen of Heaven Parish	207	235	(28)	\$125,288.24	\$40,900	\$84,388.24
Mother of God Parish	219	215	4	\$160,165.88	\$70,900	\$89,265.88
Our Lady of Lourdes Parish	17	25	(8)	\$7,392.50	\$35,900	(\$28,507.50)
Our Savior Parish	14	25	(11)	\$15,300.00	\$5,000	\$10,300.00
St. Agnes Parish	325	320	5	\$208,462.08	\$140,200	\$68,262.08
St. Ann Mission	26	35	(9)	\$37,828.00	\$8,700	\$29,128.00
St. Anthony Parish	60	70	(10)	\$29,312.00	\$27,000	\$2,312.00
St. Augustine Parish, Augusta	52	70	(18)	\$32,895.00	\$37,300	(\$4,405.00)
St. Augustine Parish, Covington	110	135	(25)	\$170,726.59	\$32,500	\$138,226.59
St. Barbara Parish	290	350	(60)	\$166,944.00	\$134,500	\$32,444.00
St. Benedict Parish	66	80	(14)	\$30,160.00	\$26,600	\$3,560.00
St. Bernard Parish	40	90	(50)	\$16,270.10	\$21,500	(\$5,229.90)
St. Catherine of Siena Parish	94	115	(21)	\$85,002.00	\$59,900	\$25,102.00
St. Cecilia Parish	198	195	3	\$79,973.95	\$97,900	(\$17,926.05)
St. Charles Borromeo Parish	28	30	(2)	\$11,090.44	\$13,800	(\$2,709.56)
St. Edward Mission, Owenton	17	25	(8)	\$5,295.00	\$4,500	\$795.00
St. Edward Parish, Cynthia	79	60	19	\$31,716.00	\$18,000	\$13,716.00
St. Francis Xavier Parish	73	70	3	\$36,955.50	\$26,500	\$10,455.50
St. Henry Parish	216	245	(29)	\$112,305.00	\$43,500	\$68,805.00
St. James Mission, Minerva	17	25	(8)	\$4,890.00	\$5,500	(\$610.00)
St. James Parish, Brooksville	25	35	(10)	\$21,360.00	\$14,000	\$7,360.00
St. John Mission, Dividing Ridge	7	15	(8)	\$1,450.00	\$3,900	(\$2,450.00)
St. John the Baptist Parish, Wilder	18	20	(2)	\$5,060.00	\$3,400	\$1,660.00
St. John the Evangelist Parish, Carrollton	25	40	(15)	\$26,280.00	\$27,800	(\$1,520.00)
St. John the Evangelist Parish, Covington	70	80	(10)	\$32,895.00	\$23,600	\$9,295.00
St. Joseph Parish, Camp Springs	80	85	(5)	\$68,935.00	\$50,200	\$18,735.00
St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring	310	335	(25)	\$131,116.00	\$104,900	\$26,216.00
St. Joseph Parish, Crescent Springs	232	255	(23)	\$217,837.75	\$149,100	\$68,737.75
St. Joseph Parish, Warsaw	35	55	(20)	\$10,242.00	\$11,000	(\$758.00)
St. Mary of the Assumption Parish	419	435	(16)	\$185,737.83	\$135,400	\$50,337.83
St. Matthew Parish	29	35	(6)	\$16,990.00	\$13,400	\$3,590.00
St. Patrick Parish, Maysville	124	140	(16)	\$54,716.00	\$55,600	(\$884.00)
St. Patrick Parish, Taylor Mil	177	155	22	\$74,056.00	\$61,400	\$12,656.00
St. Paul Parish	197	235	(38)	\$142,090.13	\$75,900	\$66,190.13
St. Philip Parish	58	75	(17)	\$43,875.00	\$12,600	\$31,275.00
St. Pius X Parish	535	550	(15)	\$444,054.38	\$226,100	\$217,954.38
St. Rose of Lima Parish	23	25	(2)	\$10,575.00	\$11,400	(\$825.00)
St. Therese Parish	145	160	(15)	\$66,049.55	\$7,200	\$58,849.55
St. Thomas Parish	197	270	(73)	\$118,076.45	\$144,400	(\$26,323.55)
St. Timothy Parish	375	360	15	\$262,006.49	\$121,600	\$140,406.49
St. William Parish	54	60	(6)	\$37,154.00	\$20,500	\$16,654.00
Sts. Boniface and James Parish	31	45	(14)	\$19,617.00	\$13,900	\$5,717.00
Sts. Peter and Paul Parish	143	145	(2)	\$66,899.18	\$32,500	\$34,399.18
Transfiguration Mission	3	15	(12)	\$1,604.44	\$2,600	(\$995.56)
Friends of the Diocese	19	0	19	\$7,245.00	-0-	\$7,245.00
Totals	6,873	7,435	(562)	\$4,317,142.14	\$2,754,000	\$1,458,757.89

QUESTIONS: PLEASE CALL THE DIOCESAN STEWARDSHIP OFFICE AT 859-392-1500